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The Lehigh University Library 1877-1977

James D. Mack
Lehigh University

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THE LEHIGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
1877-1977

The Foundation

On April 29, 1878 the Board of Trustees of Lehigh University and their wives gathered at the new Library for a ceremony of dedication. Following brief remarks, each of those present borrowed one book and signed the opening page of the Daily Register. A Bible, the first book accessioned, was issued to Sallie P. Linderman. John Fritz, the great ironmaster, borrowed Percy on Iron. Dr. Leavitt, President of the University, borrowed a volume of Locke. The books were duly returned and the Library was declared officially open for use. It does not appear that Judge Packer attended these ceremonies.

The Packers had the great misfortune of losing their daughter Lucy after her marriage to Garrett B. Linderman. Her death occurred in the year 1873. In her memory, and in addition to his other benefactions, he founded and endowed the University Library, as is duly recorded in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees. For the purpose he gave \$500,000, of which \$101,000 went toward construction of the building, and the remainder formed an endowment fund for acquiring books. This was in its time an unusually munificent fund for an academic library in the United States.

The Building

The Board of Trustees chose Addison Hutton, of Philadelphia, architect for both Packer Memorial Church and the President's House,

as architect for the original Linderman Library. In the Register of 1877-78 we may read a description of the structure: "The building is semi-circular in plan, with a handsome facade in the Venetian style of architecture. It is constructed of Potsdam sandstone with granite ornamentation. In the interior, the center is occupied as a reading space, fifty by forty feet, from which radiate the book cases, extending from floor to ceiling; two galleries affording access to the upper cases." Thus, with the basement beneath the reading space the building had four floors of radial book stacks, the area between each double-faced range serving as a study alcove. The protective railing on the galleries was of an ornamental iron; the book cases of golden oak; the building was lighted by gas; and a handsome stained glass skylight formed a dome over the center of the reading area.

The original structure, designed to house 150,000 volumes, was filled to capacity within forty years, and by the 1920s thousands of volumes had been placed in storage in the Alumni Memorial Building. Growth and change in the University's academic program demanded that library facilities be enlarged. In April 1928, pledges from twenty alumni guaranteed the sum of \$500,000 for the purpose of adding to the original building. The Trustees chose the architectural firm of Visscher and Burley, of Philadelphia, who had also designed the Alumni Memorial Building and Packard Laboratory. Upon its completion in 1929 the Library could provide seating for nearly 400 readers, 260 in a beautiful wood-panelled reading room, and shelving for 450,000 volumes.

increase,
Apart from this there were seminars, an Art Gallery, a Rare Book Room, and ample office space for the growing staff. Even so, after only 20 years it was once again necessary to remove large segments of the collection into storage, and in 1958 the Board of Trustees decided to expand library facilities yet a second time. Thus, in 1969 the Mart Science and Engineering Library was opened. Given by the late Mrs. Leon T. Mart in memory of her husband and their son, both graduates of Lehigh, the building was designed by Mr. Milton B. Steinman, of New York.

Collections

It will have been noted that for the first thirteen years of its existence, Lehigh did not have a library building as such. What books were commonly available had been the property of the Junto, a student literary society, and were available in Packer Hall. This collection was turned over to the University when the Junto disbanded in 1874, and became the nucleus of the Library upon its opening.

In any case, so ample was the Library foundation that by the 1890s Lehigh had become known among book-dealers both here and abroad as the university "with a lot of money for books." Most prominent among these dealers were G. E. Stechert, of New York, and Henry Sotheran, of London. Again, as late as 1910 the Encyclopaedia Britannica listed Lehigh's among the "important" American academic libraries in the United States. But clearly money alone did not build these collections. The skill and imagination of the first Director, William H. Chandler, Professor of Chemistry, were also needed.

In general, Dr. Chandler made two types of purchases over the first fifteen years of the Library's existence: a working collection, and a rare book collection. The working collection had at its base a splendid selection of many important journals from volume I forward. They included: the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Annalen der Physik, Justus Liebig's Annalen der Chemie, American Journal of Science, Annals of Mathematics, Deutsche Rundschau, Edinburgh Review, and Gentleman's Magazine. These indispensable files of journals gave Lehigh its traditional strength, especially in support of science and technology. But because Professor Chandler was a man of broad learning and interests, Lehigh could very early boast exceptionally good collections in the classics, history, and nineteenth century European literature. These strengths have been continued through the years.

Dr. Chandler's mandate from the Trustees included also the judicious selection of items which would illustrate the history of printed books. His broad interpretation of the injunction brought to Lehigh a collection of rare books which by any standard of his time was truly astonishing: the four Shakespeare Folios, Audubon's Birds of America, (elephant folio), Copernicus' De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium, thirteen editions of Ptolemy, travels and voyages, several rare Bibles, and a number of medieval manuscripts. This collection remains a source of surprise to scholars who think of Lehigh only in terms of engineering.

Unfortunately this period of affluence was not to last beyond fifteen years. The panic of 1893 brought Dr. Chandler's buying to an abrupt halt when the Board of Trustees was obliged to sell Lehigh Valley Railroad stock, in which the Asa Packer Library Fund was invested, at a substantial loss. This fund was reduced from \$400,000 to some \$233,000, none of which for some years was available to the Library. It is shocking, indeed, to learn that in 1895 the Lehigh Library was able to add a mere 201 volumes, as against a previous annual average of over 5,000! Nor was this the end of the troubles. In 1897 the Library - land, building and contents - was mortgaged to the Estate of Asa Packer by deed of sale as collateral for a loan to the University. (One hastens to add that, serious though it was, the Library was safe enough: several of the men who served as Trustees of the University were also executors of the Packer estate.) Once the tradition of heavy support for the Library had been broken, it would not be revived for decades. Moreover, the real difficulty remains: the damage done to a library collection by this kind of lapse is irreversible and irreparable. It is an important fact in the history of the Lehigh library that such damage did occur. By 1977 the collections numbered 640,000 volumes.

The Lehigh Library has been fortunate in its benefactions. In addition to Judge Packer and his daughter, Lucy Linderman, there have been three of note. The first brought a collection of some 11,000 books and pamphlets in technology, given in memory of Eckley Brinton Cox, a trustee, by his widow. It was particularly strong in Mining,

and included a first edition of Agricola's De Re Metallica, (1556).

Second in point of time was that of the late Harvey Bassler, E.M., '08, Sc.D. '45, a distinguished exploration geologist. During his work for the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey in Peru, Bassler had developed strong interests in Botany, Zoology and Geography, chiefly Latin American. Being a bachelor, he could indulge his interest in collecting books on these subjects. Upon his return to the states in 1929 after his last expedition, Bassler, through the good offices of Dr. Benjamin L. Miller, Head of the Department of Geology, deposited his immense collection of books and fossils at the University. His collection of nearly 6,000 volumes was shelved inside a locked wire cage in the basement, and opened only at his death. Among the many fine things it contained were, again, many long runs of journals from volume I forward. Thus, for example, The Auk, The Geological Magazine, The Botanical Gazette, Globus, and Kew Bulletin. Among rarities, the complete and monumental Voyage de Humboldt et Bonpland..., and D'Orbigny's Voyage dans L'Amerique Meridionale. Harvey Bassler made a very substantial contribution to his university.

Fifty years ago it was predicted of Lehigh's Library that "sooner or later some great private collection will be given to us, and on our campus there will be not only the greatest college library in Pennsylvania, but one of the distinguished libraries of the world." In 1929 Robert Brodhead Honeyman, Met. E., '20, gave the first books of his collection to the Lehigh Library. Among others, there was a copy

of the first edition of Euclid's Elementa (1482), a copy of the first English edition of Euclid (1570), and a page of the manuscript of Darwin's Origin of Species. In 1955, Mr. and Mrs. Honeyman gave the University their wonderful collection of American and English Literature. The gift, some 4,000 volumes, contains unusual strength in first editions of a number of authors: Edmund Spenser and John Milton among the English; Herman Melville, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving and Walt Whitman among the Americans. In addition the gift included a number of landmarks in political thought, and in science as well. Four years later the Honeymans gave their great Darwin collection, including the unique Proof Copy of On the Origin of Species and each of the first seven editions of that work.

Staff

Four men have directed the affairs of the Lehigh Library over the one hundred years of its existence: William H. Chandler from 1878 to 1906; John L. Stewart from 1906 to 1923; Howard S. Leach from 1924 to 1948; and James D. Mack from 1948. ^{until 1976} At the beginning, and until 1919, the staff consisted of the Director, a cataloger and a clerk. By 1946 the staff had grown to twelve, and in 1977, to forty-seven. Expansion of services expected by readers and the ever-increasing volume of publication have both contributed to this growth. *Prof B - R - first woman Director of Libraries became head Lib in 1976*

Governance

Among institutions
The governance of libraries varies little from place to place.

Some libraries are restrictive, others are not, but the differences are not great. In general, however, the years from 1880 to the present have shown a clear trend toward liberalization. It will be noted that at the first the Lehigh Library, though available to the public, was operated as a closed system. Thus the published "Regulations of the Lehigh University Library" as they appeared in the Register for 1878-79, read as follows:

- "I. The Library is open every day, except Sundays and Legal Holidays, from 8 A.M. until 9 P.M.
- II. Admission is free to all persons over 16 years of age.
- III. Readers are required to write their names and addresses in the Daily Register of the Library. They also write the name of the book desired upon a Library card with their signatures, and present the same to the Director's Clerk, who supplies the book, retaining the card as a receipt. Before leaving the Library, readers return their books to the clerk and receive their cards.
- IV. No book is permitted, under any circumstances, to be taken from the Library.
- V. No person is allowed to enter the alcoves, or remove any book from the shelves, without the permission of the Director.

- VI. Readers wishing to consult the more valuable illustrated works make special application for that purpose.
- VII. In taking notes, pencils, and not pens and ink, are to be used.
- VIII. Audible conversation and the use of tobacco are strictly forbidden in any part of the Library.
- IX. Any person not conforming to these Regulations, will be denied the privileges of the Library.
- X. Any person who defaces, in any way, any book, magazine or paper, or the furniture, or any portion of the building, in addition to being deprived of the privileges of the Library, will be prosecuted according to law."

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In sum, it may be said that the first century of the Lehigh University Library had both happy and unhappy aspects. Its beginning was splendid, to say the least. Falling upon hard times, its fortune declined; and what might once have been a major national scholarly resource suffered a serious reverse. It is, of course, to be hoped that it will never again be permitted to suffer unduly from economic difficulty.

4 March 1976